

Summer Weather Review

Highlights: The South-Central States turned hot and dry after a wet June, increasingly stressing pastures and summer crops. Across the South, long-term drought conditions worsened through the summer as far east as Alabama, while August showers eased moisture deficits in parts of the southern Atlantic region. Farther north, the Mid-Atlantic region remained cool and wet for much of the summer. In the Midwest, timely rainfall and average temperatures as much as 2°F below normal resulted in generally favorable conditions for corn and soybeans. Unfavorably dry conditions prevailed, however, from the Northwest and Intermountain West to the High Plains, accompanied by temperatures that averaged up to 3°F above normal. By summer's end, areas on the Plains with adequate soil moisture for filling summer crops and winter grain planting preparations were confined to eastern portions of the northern Plains. Summer heat and dryness contributed to a harsh wildfire season from the Great Basin to the northern Rockies, but abundant late-summer rainfall in parts of the Southwest eased long-term moisture deficits.

June: Frequent, often heavy showers soaked areas from the southern and eastern Plains into the Midwest and Northeast, maintaining adequate to locally excessive soil moisture for summer crop development. Although cool, wet conditions significantly eased long-term drought in the southwestern Corn Belt, dry, occasionally hot weather brought drought intensification and stress to dryland crops on the central and northern High Plains. In the South, soil moisture remained generally adequate from the Delta westward, although a late-month drying trend depleted topsoil moisture across southern Texas. Mid- to late-month showers in the Southeast aided pastures and summer crops, but provided little relief from long-term drought. Meanwhile in the Southwest, the early arrival of seasonal showers eased irrigation requirements and curbed the wildfire threat. In California, favorably warm, dry weather followed early-month showers. Much of the interior Northwest remained dry throughout the month, promoting winter wheat maturation but reducing soil moisture for spring-sown grains.

Monthly temperatures averaged near normal in the Northwest, but generally ranged from 1 to 5°F above normal in California and the Southwest. East of the Rockies, the only large area of above-normal June temperatures (up to 3°F above normal) encompassed the middle and southern Atlantic regions. In contrast, monthly readings averaged 1 to 4°F below normal in much of the Plains and Midwest. Corn Belt temperature remained at or below 90°F throughout the month, except for a brief period in early June across western areas, favoring corn and soybean development.

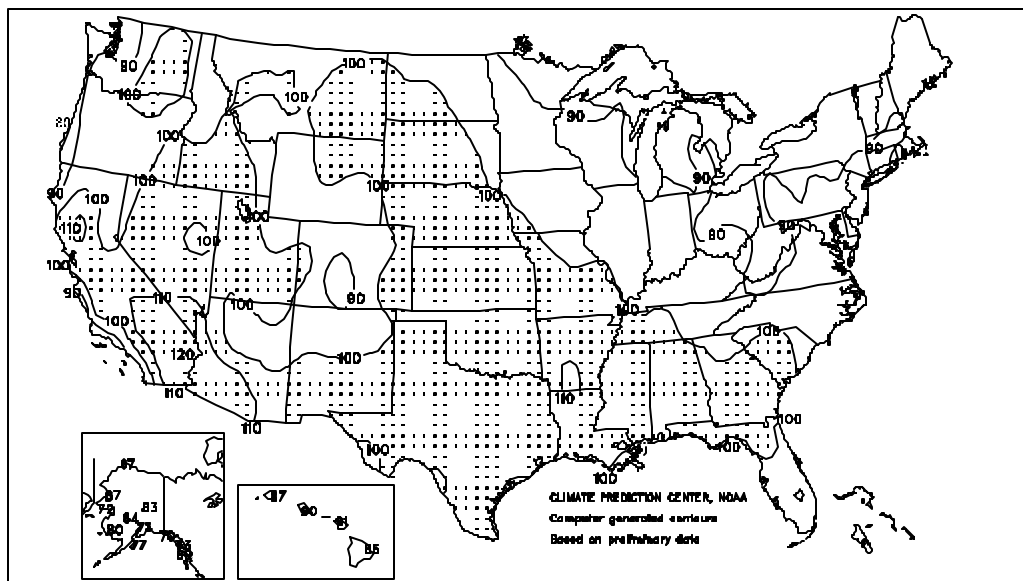
July: Adequate rainfall and below-normal temperatures in the Corn Belt and Northeast contrasted sharply with hot, mostly dry weather in the South, High Plains, and Intermountain West. A late-July pattern change brought heat intensification and increased wildfire activity to the West, cooler weather to the South, and widespread, drought-easing rainfall to the southern Atlantic States. July rainfall totaled less than 50 percent of normal in much of the West and in many areas from Texas to the Delta. Significant dryness was also noted west of the Atlantic coastal plain, especially in the hardest-hit drought areas of Georgia, Alabama, and western Florida.

Heat and dryness depleted topsoil moisture in many areas from Texas to the Delta, stressing pastures and immature summer crops. Until late-month rainfall boosted topsoil moisture in the Southeast, 3 weeks of extremely hot, dry weather severely stressed already drought-affected crops. Farther north, Corn Belt temperatures remained well below 95°F, minimizing stress on reproductive to filling summer crops. Monthly temperatures averaged 1 to 4°F below normal in the Corn Belt, but up to 3°F above normal in the Southeast and as much as 5°F above normal in parts of southern Texas. Readings ranged from 1 to 4°F above normal on the northern and central High Plains. Although hot weather affected the Intermountain West, cool conditions prevailed closer to the West Coast. Temperatures averaged as much as 4°F below normal in California's Central Valley.

August: A complete summary begins on page 10.

Extreme Maximum Temperature (°F)

JUN - AUG 2000



In the South-Central States, the meteorological summer closed in the midst of a heat wave unprecedented for both its intensity and lateness in the year. (Some of the most extreme heat carried into early September, especially from southern and eastern Texas to the Delta.) But while El Dorado, AR posted a high of 112°F on August 31, Cleveland, OH threatened to complete a year without 90°F heat for the first time since 1960. Several other places in the Midwest, including Peoria, IL (August 14) and Springfield, IL (August 15), noted their latest first occurrence of 90°F heat. Some of the summer's warmest weather reached the Midwest on August 31, producing the year-to-date's highest temperatures in locations such as LaCrosse, WI (95°F) and Marquette, MI (90°F). Chicago, IL noted just 2 days of 90°F heat (on August 15 and 31), compared with an June-August normal of 15 days. Meanwhile, Milwaukee, WI failed to notch a high at or above 90°F during the summer—the highest was 89°F on June 10—for the first time since 1950.